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**February 14, 2019**

**To:** City Council  
City Hall, 301 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

**From:** Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC)

**RE:** Unanimous Letter of Support for the Residential Multifamily Zone

**Recommended Action:** The Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC) unanimously recommends that City Council approve the proposed Residential Multifamily zone (RMF). Approval of this new zone will buttress the City's commitment to affordable housing with a special emphasis on assisting our fellow residents with incomes below 60% of the area median income (AMI), including seniors, persons with disabilities, and families working in our expanding service, retail, and hospitality sectors. The zone will serve as a new tool to incentivize both the preservation of existing *and* creation of new housing opportunity while minimizing the need for city investment. Currently, the creation of one new affordable unit may require up to \$95,000 in local gap funding due to the high cost of land and escalating costs of construction materials and labor.

**The Need:** In September 2018, City Council adopted the South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy (the Strategy) to proactively address expiring federal housing assistance contracts that threaten two of the city's deeply affordable communities, The Heritage at Old Town (The Heritage) and Olde Towne West III (OTW). The Heritage and OTW's combined 215 committed affordable units (CAUs) currently serve households with incomes reaching as low as approximately 20-30% of AMI. Analysis showed that the density granted under Section 7-700 was inadequate to preserve the existing levels of affordability at these two properties and that a new tool would be necessary to incentivize preservation and deep affordability.

**The Solution:** AHAAC has been closely monitoring the planning and subsequent implementation of the Strategy and is pleased with development of the proposed zoning tool. The RMF zone will allow densities up to a 3.0 Floor Area Ratio with a special use permit if a minimum of one third of the additional density is provided as committed affordable housing. Importantly, AHAAC believes this will encourage the retention of existing federal rental housing subsidies and help preserve the CAUs in the South Patrick Street area.

AHAAC also notes and underscores the importance of requiring the submission and review of an Affordable Housing Plan and Relocation Plan consistent with published city standards as part of the new zone. These plans will be subject, respectively, to the review of AHAAC and the Landlord Tenant Relations Board to ensure they reflect the intent of the new zone to preserve and/or expand housing affordability and the city's commitment to minimizing the impacts of displacement and ensuring the right to return of all eligible residents.

**Future Considerations:** AHAAC applauds that the new zone will not obviate other city requirements for future development projects; rather it will provide private and nonprofit developers with an additional tool to meet Alexandria's affordable housing needs. Going forward, a request for increased density under the RMF zone will trigger compliance with applicable Small Area Plans and other City plans and policies and will need to follow established development review and community engagement processes. Thank you for considering approval of this new zone.

Sincerely,

*Robyn J. Konkel*

Robyn Konkel  
Chair, Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee